

# Partners

## *In Progress* Preview



EPA Update on Federal Facility Cleanup and Reuse

## Navy Tests Innovative Approach to Sell Former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station Property

**M**ost of the land of the former El Toro Marine Corps Air Station is about to be transformed into viable civilian use through an innovative planning and marketing approach. Four parcels ranging from 200 to 1,700 acres in size are ready for transfer and will be sold through an online auction.

El Toro is located in the heart of Orange County in Southern California. Over the past year, the Department of the Navy (the property owner) and the City of Irvine have worked as a team to bring the property to a point where private ownership and the vision of a Great Park can be realized. In a unique model of public and private cooperation, the Navy is readying the property for sale, local government has provided the reuse vision and master plan, and private industry will purchase and develop the site. Federal and state regulators are providing oversight of remaining cleanup. This model has each party playing the role for which it is best suited.

Proceeds from the "Heritage Fields" sale will be used to finance remaining work in the Navy's base closure program. The Navy has been working closely with the City of Irvine, which developed a reuse plan for the base that includes a large park, educational uses, golf courses, residential, and retail/commercial use.

On August 3, 2004, the Navy Southwest Division signed a Finding of Suitability to Transfer (FOST) covering 2,798 acres, indicating that all necessary cleanup has been completed. This property can now be sold for unrestricted use consistent with state and local land use plans. The Navy concurrently issued a Finding of Suitability to Lease (FOSL) covering 921

acres that can be sold once environmental work is finished. The Navy also received unqualified concurrence letters from both EPA and the California Department of Toxic Substances Control (DTSC), which also issued a RCRA Corrective Action Complete Determination for the site indicating that corrective action has been completed.

El Toro was commissioned in 1943 as a major Marine Corps combat pilot training facility during World War II. It became the permanent West Coast center for Marine and Marine Air Reserve aviation operations. El Toro included an airfield with five runways, associated taxiways, hangars, maintenance, training, and support facilities, and housing for base personnel.

When El Toro was officially closed in 1999 under the Defense Base Closure and Realignment Act of 1990, the Navy, in concert with EPA and state and local officials, began restoring the site for reuse. Activities at the base had generated waste oils, paint residues, hydraulic fluids, polychlorinated biphenyls (PCBs), battery acids, and leaded fuel wastes. Two large aircraft hangars were the primary source of trichloroethene (TCE), a volatile organic compound that had contaminated groundwater (but not drinking water) on the base. El Toro was included on EPA's National Priorities List of hazardous waste sites. Cleanup continues on the remaining 921 acres that are unavailable for transfer. Some of these areas will be available for use under lease but others will not be available for several years.

The Navy plans to begin the auction in late 2004 and complete actual transfer of property by early summer, 2005. EPA and the Navy believe this con-

cept offers great promise for getting property back into productive use for local government and maximizing the return for the taxpayer. If this strategy is successful, the Navy will consider this approach as a model for other closed bases. Visit the official Heritage Fields Web site at [www.heritagefields.com](http://www.heritagefields.com) for complete details on the auction and future plans for the site.

## After 64 Years of Service, Weldon Spring Goes Back to Nature

In 1940, three rural Missouri towns were razed when the U.S. Department of the Army acquired 17,232 acres of land to construct the Weldon Spring Ordnance Works, which produced trinitrotoluene (TNT) and dinitrotoluene (DNT) for munitions during World War II. In 1955, the U.S. Atomic Energy Commission (AEC) built the Weldon Spring Uranium Feed Materials Plant to process uranium ore. Now, decades later, cleanup activities conducted by the Army and the Department of Energy (DOE, the successor agency to the AEC) have made it possible for the public to again enjoy the countryside at the Weldon Spring site.

Today, on the DOE side of the fence, the long-serving federal site features the Weldon Spring Interpretive Center, providing visitors with a history of the site, as well as hiking and biking trails and

an observation deck on top of the 75-foot high, 45-acre disposal cell that holds the site's contaminated materials. Ongoing projects at the site include the planting of a horticultural garden and 200 acres of native Missouri prairie in the site's buffer zone.

The Feed Material Plant processed uranium for use in atomic weapons and nuclear fuels until 1966. The uranium processing site was transferred back to the Army in 1967 to create a chemical plant to produce the powerful herbicide Agent Orange, but no chemicals were ever produced there. In 1987, the Weldon Spring Quarry was designated as a Superfund site. The chemical plant site and ordnance work sites later were added to the National Priorities List.

Major cleanup operations at DOE's Weldon Spring site began in 1991 with the decontamination and dismantling of 43 buildings and structures, followed by cleanup of groundwater, quarry water, and contaminated soil and solid waste. The site's disposal cell now houses almost 1.5 million cubic yards of contaminated material.

The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is currently completing a Section 120 Interagency Agreement that will facilitate the continued operation and maintenance of the DOE site. The agreement among EPA, DOE, and the state of Missouri will be completed over the next several months and will govern the long-term surveillance, operation, and maintenance for Weldon Spring.

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This preview features just some of the news and issues that will be covered in the upcoming *Partners in Progress* #9. *PIP* is now available in both print and online electronic formats. By providing our latest news electronically, FFRRO is furthering the goals of the Resource Conservation Challenge by conserving valuable natural resources. If you wish to receive e-mail notification of new online *PIP* issues, please send an e-mail notification to [<young.dianna@epa.gov>](mailto:young.dianna@epa.gov).

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